

10/051,555

Response

The claims were amended in accordance with the amendments above. All of the amendments are fully supported by the specification, claims, and figures as originally filed. No new matter is believed or intended to be involved.

While the Office Action dated 11/21/2006 was marked “Final,” Applicant nevertheless submits that the present amendments should be entered in accordance with 37 CFR 1.1116(b)(1). In particular, the present amendments merely cancel claims (claims 52-64). No new claims are being added herein, no new limitations are being added herein, and no new issues are being raised herein. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the present amendments be entered promptly.

In the Office Action dated 11/21/2006, claims 39-47, 49, 51-58, 60-67 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Assisi (US 5,696,488) in view of Bexten (US 6,205,133) and Evans, III (US 5,732,231). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

The Applicant maintains the position set forth by the Applicant in the response dated 09/15/2006 with respect to claims 39-47, 49, 51, and 65-68, and submits that the Office’s arguments in the 11/21/2006 Office Action have failed to rebut the arguments made by Applicant. Rather than reiterating the same arguments herein, Applicant elects to reduce the total number of claims in order to reduce the number of issues to be addressed in an appeal that Applicant intends to file.

To the extent that the present amendments constitute a narrowing of the claims, such narrowing of the claims should not be construed as an admission as to the merits of the prior rejections. In particular, the cancellation of claims 52-64 should not be construed as an admission with respect to the rejection of claims 52-64. Instead, this amendment merely marks a decision to focus presently on the subject matter of claims 39-47, 49, 51, and 65-68. Indeed, Applicant traverses the rejections and preserves all rights and arguments.

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Based on the foregoing, all pending claims are in a condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and an early notice of allowance.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. B. Ulmer', written over a horizontal line.

Andrew B. Ulmer (Reg. No. 57,003)

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